

Remarks at Lighthouse Elementary School in Jupiter, Florida October 31, 1997

Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you. Hello! Well, I finally made it. First, you know, I hurt my leg, and I couldn't come. And this morning, I got up at 5:30, and I was getting ready to come here, and I thought, I'm going to be able to keep my promise to the children at Lighthouse Elementary. Then we got to the airport, and it was so foggy in Washington that I couldn't see my hand before me, and we had to wait for 2 hours to take off. So I made you late, and now you are a little bit wet. [Laughter] But you look beautiful to me, and I thank you for making me feel so welcome. Thank you.

I want to thank Congressman Deutsch and Congressman Foley for coming with me, and, Mayor, thank you for making me feel so welcome. Principal Hukill, thank you for what you said. And I thought Jessica did a wonderful job introducing me, didn't you?

I'd also like to thank the people who are here from the Palm Beach County Literacy Coalition, Palm Beach America Reads. The district president of the Miami-Dade Community College, Dr. Padron, is here, I think. And I thank you all for being here. And I thank the middle school band for being here. I hope you'll play me some music when I'm finished speaking; I want to hear you.

I am so glad to be here with all of you today, because one of my most important responsibilities as President is to do everything I can to see that you get a world-class education. You know you are living in a world that is dominated by computers and technology. But you also live in a world which you can't fully enjoy them unless you can read well, unless you can do basic math, unless you can learn the things that your teachers are trying to teach you.

And about a year ago I tried to think of what I wanted to say to America in one sentence about our schools. And it is that I want an America in which every 8-year-old child can read a good book on his or her own, in which every 12-year-old can log on to the Internet, in which every 18-year-old, without regard to their family's income, can go to college and every adult can keep on learning for a lifetime.

Will you help me make that kind of America? Will you do that? [Applause]

I want to thank all of the people here who helped Lighthouse Elementary succeed, to show that every school, to succeed, needs to be a community school or, as my wife says, a school where the whole village is involved in helping children learn. There are 250 volunteers who contribute at least 1,000 hours of their time to the students and the teachers every month. That's wonderful. If every school could say that, education in America would be much better. You should be proud of yourselves.

I also want to congratulate the students here who participate in the Sunshine State Readers program and read 15 books a month and write reports on them. I wish I still had time to read 15 books a month. You will never regret it. And if you don't read that much a month, every one of you should do whatever you can to read more. You will learn a lot and help yourselves, and it's a lot of fun.

Let me finally say that we are going to do everything we can in Washington to help make sure that a college education will be there for you if you'll work hard at school and learn what you need to know. We want to help your families send you to college. We want to help get high standards in the later grades as well. But in the end, it all depends on every one of you, what's in your heart and what's in your mind.

When you were singing your school song today and you felt good doing it, that's the way I want you to feel when you're in class. I want you to be proud of what you can learn, and I want you to believe that every one of you was given a mind by God that can learn. You can all learn. You can all do better. You can all learn more.

So be brave, and have a good time, and make the most of your education. And thank you so much for making me feel so welcome today.

God bless you all.

NOTE. The President spoke at 1:16 p.m. on the athletic field. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor

Karen Golonka of Jupiter; Una Hukill, principal, School; and Eduardo Padron, president, Miami-Dade Community College.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Democratic National Committee Luncheon in Palm Beach, Florida

October 31, 1997

The President. Harriet got on a roll; I didn't want her to stop. What did you say? No, I was just thinking Harriet was on a roll. I didn't want to stop her.

Thank you, and thank you, Jerome. We are old friends. And I want to thank Sidney and Dorothy for having me back in their wonderful home. I was here a little over 5 years ago. They look much younger even than they did then, and I have all this gray hair to show for the last 5 years, but I've enjoyed it immensely.

You mentioned the St. Mary's Hospital Board, and for those of you who don't know, that was the hospital that took care of me when I tore my leg off by falling 8 inches here a few months ago. I visited the little school in Jupiter that I was supposed to visit that day when I couldn't go. And I'm delighted to be back here.

We're in Florida, among other things, pushing the fast-track legislation. There's going to be a vote in Congress next week. And Secretary Daley, the Secretary of Commerce, and my Special Counselor, Doug Sosnik, who has a wife from Argentina, the three of us just got back from Latin America. And I came back even more convinced than ever that it's the right thing to do for our country.

Let me just be very brief. What I'd like to do is to talk a minute or two, and then if you have a couple of questions, maybe I could hear from you. That would help save my voice, and it will be more interesting for you.

We learned today that growth in the last quarter—this quarter—is 3.5 percent, and growth has averaged almost 4 percent over the last year, the highest in more than a decade. I think that has come about because we both broke political gridlock in Washington in 1993 with the economic plan and in 1997 with the Balanced Budget Act and because, perhaps even more important, we broke an intellectual gridlock.

Harriet mentioned that she knew me a long time before I became President. Most Ameri-

cans didn't. And one of the things that never ceases to amaze me is when I read things written about our policies and they say, "Well, he's adopted this Republican policy and that Democratic policy and just making it up as he goes along." I was reading the other day—last night, getting ready to come down here, an article I wrote in 1988 that basically sounds like the speeches I'm giving today. But if you're a Governor out in the hinterland, you don't exist for people that interpret you to America until you move to Washington. So I thank Jerome and Harriet for being my old friends.

But what I wanted to do when I came to Washington 6 years ago was to get people to stop thinking in these sort of outdated left-right terms and start thinking instead about what we were trying to do, what is the mission of America. And if you think about it in that term, it helps you to pick the proper course.

With our economic policy, it seemed to me there was a huge fight between whether we should run a huge deficit and cut taxes or whether we should run a slightly smaller deficit and spend more money. And I thought both of those were wrong for the modern economy. And people laughed at me when I went to Washington and said, "Here's what we're going to do. We're going to reduce the deficit, balance the budget, and spend more money on education and the health care of our children and empowering our poorest communities." And they said, "Yeah, and the \$3 bill is coming back." But that's what we've done, and it worked.

On crime, it seemed to me we were having a phony debate in Washington about whether we needed to talk tougher and have harsher sentences or do more to help prevent crime in the first place. The sensible thing to do is to sentence more harshly people who should